



SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY

★★★★

RELEASED: May 24
DIRECTOR: Ron Howard
CAST: Alden Ehrenreich, Woody Harrelson, Emilia Clarke
RATING: M

A good old-fashioned intergalactic adventure story.

The bromance between Han Solo and his Wookiee co-pilot Chewbacca is surely the most satisfying love affair thus far in the ten-movie arc of the *Star Wars* stories.

The previous love stories involving an incompatible older Solo and Princess Leia, and the doomed love between young Anakin Skywalker and secret bride Padme Amidala, cannot compare.

Making his debut as a youthful, swaggering Han Solo – and yes, we get to learn how he came about his name – Alden Ehrenreich delivers a compelling performance as the galaxy's most beloved scoundrel, laying the groundwork for why Solo will ultimately become the cynical, world-weary Harrison Ford incarnation. It's true, Ehrenreich doesn't much resemble Ford physically, but it really doesn't matter.

And at last, Chewie gets some serious screen time, making a thoroughly amusing leap from flesh-eating fiend to fearless friend.

A cross between heist film and space western, we also discover the origin of Solo's relationship with frenemy Lando Calrissian, the rakish gambler originally portrayed by Billy Dee Williams, today elegantly re-embodied by Donald Glover.

Fanboys and girls will enjoy not one but two Dejarik games, while the fellow guests at the two claw-biting Sabacc

games are among the most unique thus far, grunting and squirming as we witness Solo's capricious grasp on the Millennium Falcon.

Paul Bettany breathes psychotic menace into scar-faced crime boss Dryden Voss, while Woody Harrelson and Thandie Newton make a fine screen team of bootleggers. As young lovers, Solo and Emilia Clarke's Qi'ra get off to a rocky start. Plotting their escape from a Corellian slave colony, their destinies are a hyperdrive jump in different directions, with questionable motives.

Refreshingly, there's no talking heads explaining the complexities of the Empire or First Order, no hushed awe about the Force, no Jedi or Sith (well, hardly any) – just a good old-fashioned intergalactic adventure story, unburdened by Lucasfilm mythology and wooden dialogue.

With all the space fallout over the eleventh-hour replacement of cheeky iconoclasts Chris Miller and Phil Lord with the reliable Ron Howard, it's hard to know where each director's vision begins and ends. For example, who

will take responsibility for the somewhat underwhelming Proxima, leader of the vampirish White Worm clan?

No *Star Wars* film is complete without an adorable bleeping bot or droid, but Solo's L3-37, voiced by Phoebe Waller-Bridge, offers something entirely new. A feminist revolutionary with a mind of her own and a capacity for love, it's impossible not to cheer her on.

Gill Pringle



SCREENING IN JUNE 2018



INCREDIBLES 2

Pixar's track record with quality sequels is strong and writer-director Brad Bird is back, so we can expect something, well, incredible here. Mr. Incredible is looking after the kids while Elastigirl fights crime, and we discover the extent of baby Jack-Jack's superpowers. John Ratzenberger voices new villain The Underminer, and best of all, fashion designer Edna Mode returns! **June 14.** (See page 14)



JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM

It's the dinosaurs that need saving this time. Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard are up for the challenge, and Jeff Goldblum returns to do the math on the chances of success. **June 21.**



OCEAN'S 8

While George Clooney and his lads take a break, his sister Debbie Ocean (Sandra Bullock) moves in on the heist action, having devised the perfect diamond robbery at the Met Gala. **June 7.**



HEREDITARY

The scariest horror film since *The Exorcist*? We shall see. This new chiller starring our own Toni Collette has been terrifying audiences and critics on the festival circuit, and opens here on **June 7.**

RATING KEY: ★★★★★ Wow! ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Not bad ★★★★★ Meh ★★★★★ Woof!